

FROM FAR LEFT:
FRANCESCA DIMATTIO
Pygmy Caryatid,
 2019.
 Glazed porcelain,
 15 x 15 x 16 in.

Telephone,
 2019.
 Glazed porcelain,
 16 x 16 in.



THIS PAGE, LEFT AND CENTER: KAREN PEARSON, COURTESY THE ARTIST; RIGHT AND OPPOSITE: JUSSI TAINEN

HELSINKI

Anna Estarriola

Galerie Anhava

Two anonymous, orange-suited figures peering into the body of a headless pygmy hippopotamus offered a stunning prelude to “Hideouts,” Anna Estarriola’s recent exhibition of new work. Visible from the street through a ground-floor window, *Resonance* generated untold assumptions. Entry added to the conundrum, as the voices of a mixed cappella trio intermittently suffused the gallery. Movement toward and around the sculpture confirmed it as the sound source and yielded a surprise. A third anonymous figure (hoods obscured the features of all three) sat inside the dark and otherwise empty fiberglass hippo’s shell. This raised questions as to whether the trio was testing the cavity’s acoustics or portraying the singers—and why were they clad in high-visibility safety gear? Although the absurd scenario baffled interpretation, the strength of its visual impact made it difficult to forget. For me, the figures’ postures evinced the curiosity and aptitude for close observation displayed by children. I was immediately reminded of when my twins, as toddlers, exhibited a fascination for peering into my wide-open mouth.

The sister pieces *Transition / assisted breathing* and *Transition /*

see through echoed aspects of *Resonance*. A conspicuous aperture distinguished the pallid figurative element in each work, but scrutiny produced remarkably different results. While the pumping and wheezing of a medical ventilator issued from the open mouth in the former, the hole in the hand of the latter opened into a seemingly boundless black domain studded with numerous miniature points of light. Generating mixed sensations of anxiety and wonder, the juxtaposition also conveyed an elegiac air. The sense of unity between the two pieces was reinforced by the design of their plinths and the treatment of the adjacent walls. Painted chroma key blue and connected to the plinth of *Transition / assisted breathing* by way of a power cable, wall panels could potentially be called into service as giant backdrops on which the anonymous subject’s secret dreams and memories could be displayed.

The daunting *Ongoing* and *Muffled* seemed to be influenced by nightmares or science fiction. *Ongoing* was the more lighthearted of the two, a large hairy puffball emulating the look of a tribble (a small alien creature that debuted in a 1960s episode of *Star Trek*). *Muffled*, on the other hand, was derived directly

from a biopsy sample of the artist’s skin, reproduced at a scale 2,000 times its original size. Isolated in a clinical gray alcove, this spongy, flesh-colored membrane—which also resembled the model of a landform, its surface periodically disrupted by subtle and rather creepy bursts of trembling—issued indistinct snippets of conversation. *Guided* presented viewers with the opportunity to reset their inner constitution simply by following directions delivered through headphones, which were also connected to a large shelf-bound rat. Tracking the rodent’s video-actuated eye movements during the three-minute-long process

triggered an intriguing combination of disbelief, humor, and apprehension.

Estarriola’s dynamic grab bag of sights, sounds, and situations communicated on visual, intellectual, emotional, and physical levels, demonstrating her ability to manifest the idiosyncratic and ambiguous hunches and impressions that inform our reality in concrete terms. The expert design and craftsmanship in “Hideouts” was guided by a broad base of knowledge and experience. In addition to incorporating sculpture, video, sound, and installation, these works also displayed a familiarity with theatrical and kinetic devices—though they never seemed stilted or forced. Seen together, they could be compared to a volume of highly imaginative and stimulating stories, coalescing into a potent exploration of what lies beyond.

—JOHN GAYER

OPPOSITE:
ANNA ESTARRIOLA
Muffled,
 2019.

Silicon, sound system,
 and wood,
 76 x 129 x 129 cm.

THIS PAGE:
ANNA ESTARRIOLA
Resonance,
 2019.

Fiberglass, plaster,
 textile, sound system,
 and electronics,
 125 x 282 x 125 cm.

